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FEMALE PROTAGONISTS IN SIOBHAN VIVIAN'S YOUNG ADULT NOVELS

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INTRODUCTION

The development of Young Adult literature, popularly known as YA literature is a relatively recent phenomenon. This 'coming – age' literature that emerged in America provides rich literary material for exploring issues and dilemmas of human experience as perceived by the young aged between 12 and 18. This age is so vulnerable that the adolescents often consider themselves 'apart' from the world around them. Obviously, their life which is a chaotic conglomeration of curiosity, doubts, prejudices, identity crises, love, hatred, isolation, jealousy, etc. has attracted writers across the globe in a profound way. The literature written for the young adults is in fact an experience of sharing lives together, communicating sorrow and joys and most importantly a voice of and for the youth. It is skeptical as well as optimistic at times. Today Young Adult literature has become a 'powerhouse' in publishing community that is capitalizing on new, large and more sophisticated audience. As Cambell (2004) points out more books are speaking "directly to the teen themselves" and not to teachers or librarians.

Young Adult Literature: A Genre

The concept of Young Adult Fiction is fluid one, as it is a 'cultural' construct. Since renowned authors are writing quality literature especially for adolescents, Young Adult literature has earned a respected place in the reading audience. By exploring the issues like romance, friendship, identity crisis, sisterhood, sexuality, etc the genre is sensitively dealt with by the authors. However, romance is still popular theme among the young adult authors. The

genre offers a landscape in which teens easily relate themselves to the situation. It also features adolescent journey to adulthood. In the course of time, they transform into adult, working through personal issues and learning to take responsibility for their actions.

Today Young adult literature has become popular with readers of all ages. It serves many purposes. The issues addressed in them even allow the parents to see what their teens care about through what they are reading. It provides pleasurable reading experience for young people while emphasizing real life experience. However, the young adult novel's primary subtext is usually about identity construction. Young adults construct their sense of self and books they read maybe a part of that process. Johnny Green, Suzanne Collins, Stephanie Mayer, Veronica Roth, Angie Thomas are the leading Young Adult novelists.

Definitions: Young Adult Literature

- Young Adult literature is a literature written for and marketed to young adults.

  Beach and Marshall

- A genre of novels, movies, and T.V shows that often focuses on the perspectives of young teen protagonist who is "goody-two shoe Mary sue messianic" type of character who lives in a dystopian setting, and for some reason he/she is leader of rebellion against a totalitarian government or uncover a government conspiracy.

  Urban Dictionary

SALIENT FEATURES OF YOUNG ADULT FICTION

- The fundamental aim is to persuade young readers.
- The action revolves around the teenager protagonist who struggles to resolve the conflicting situations.

- The story is often written for young adult of age group -12 to 18 and told by the voice of young adults focusing on diverse coming of age issues from both local and global perspective.
- Characters are neither good or bad but rich and well rounded.
- The endings often are abrupt which leave the readers little to think about.
- The young adult protagonists solve problems for themselves without the help of their parents.
- Young Adult Fiction offers stories that are short and powerful with more complex plots.

Emergence of Young Adult Literature: A Brief Survey

In mid 1940's The Librarians categorised Teenagers Literature as 'Young Adult'. In 1944 Librarian Margaret Scaggin, in her journal, introduced this new term to the world. In 1960's the American association of librarians - The Young Adult Library Services Associations (YALSA) used the term 'Young Adult' for the fiction written for the teenagers belonging to 12-18 age range. Hence like Jazz and Broad-way musical and foot-long not dog- music, Young Adult Fiction is an American gift to the world. It emerged into being near the end of 1960s. Two seminal novels for young readers -S.E. Hinton's *The Outsider* (1967), and Robert Lipsyte's *The Contender* (1967) were published for the young adults. S.E. Hinton's The *Outsider* is considered the first young adult novel. It deals with the darker side of adolescent life showing the violence of America's gang culture. Hinton has used contemporary realism in her work. This was the first novel published under heading of young Adult fiction and became one of the best- selling young adult novel of all time.

Between the 1970's and the 1990's the media paid attention to adolescents due to an influence of these two books. Talk shows, Cable televisions and internet began to address teenagers' problems and concerns extensively. In the

1980s, young adult books dealt with topics such as rape, suicide, parental problems and became commercially successful. But in the 1990s, due to combination of continued exploration of mature and controversial themes, Young Adult Fiction was at risk of losing its prominence. However, a trend was further solidified by *The Hunger Games* (1 to3 parts published between 2008 to 2010) by Suzanne Collins and J K Rowling's *Harry Potter* (1 to7 parts published between 1997 to 2007) series and the novels became famous among the young readers. The end of the decade saw number of awards appeared for young adult writers. In addition, in the twentieth century, a considerable shift occurred about it. Authors began to write more books for older teens. In the article, "Ice cream/I scream for YA books," Don Gallo has examined its various flavours and its richness. The article proclaims the deep insight of the field and the quality of its writers.

Life And Works of Siobhan Vivian

Siobhan Vivian (b. 1979) is the bestselling and one of the leading American young adult novelists. Apart from being a novelist, she is an editor and screenwriter. Siobhan Vivian currently teaches writing Youth Literature at the University of Pittsburgh. She is widely known for her strong depiction of female protagonist struggling with their issues. She began her career as an editor at Aloy Entertainment and then worked as a screenwriter. In 2008, Vivian published her first book, *A Little Friendly Advice* and won reputation as an young Adult writer. Vivian's next book a *Same Difference* (2009), has won the Kirkus Reviews Best Book of the year award as well as in 2012 ALA best fiction for young adult. She has also won these two awards for her novel - *Not That Kind of Girl* which explores teen girls' identities and relationship.

Siobhan Vivian's Novels:

1) *Stay Sweet* (2018)
2) *Same Difference* (2017)
3) *The Last Boy and Girl in the World (*2016)
4) *The List* (2014)
5) *Not That Kind of Girl* (2010)
6) *A Little Friendly Advice (*2008)

Scope and limitation of the study:

The scope of the present study is limited to the study Female protagonists portrayed in the selected novels of Siobhan vivian. Selected novels can be analyse from different perspectives, however the present study limits its scope to young adult girl culture and their journey towards empowerment.

The six novels mentioned above have been selected for the proposed study. The researcher intends to restrict his study to Siobhan Vivian's six novels published up to 2018.

Aims and Objectives of the Study-

1) To explore female protagonists portrayed in young adult fiction.
2) To evaluate contribution of Siobhan Vivian to the realistic young adult fictions.

Hypothesis:

Female protagonists in Siobhan Vivian's novels strive for the possibilities of female empowerment.

Review of Relevant Literature:

Extensive studies have been carried out to define Young Adult Fiction as genre in general and the portrayal of female protagonists in the genre in

particular. Many critics of Young Adult Fiction have noted their critical comments on the works of Siobhan Vivian. The reviews are as follows:

The Star Kirkus Review (2010) states that Vivian's novel *Not That Kind of Girl* questions the sexuality of the teen girls and the approach of the society towards it. It is rare to see Second, and Third-wave feminism square off in YA literature successfully.

Booklist (2010) opines that Vivian challenges the assumptions about sex being rampant in high school and sends the positive message about the acceptance, forgiveness and love in her novels.

Not That Kind of Girl is the critically acclaimed novel of Siobhan Vivian. *The school library Journal* (2010) critically states that the protagonist is the perfect representation of a conflicted twentieth century feminist teen. Vivian reveals her life through pitch perfect dialogues and emotional honesty of her characters - Natalie and Conner.

The List is Siobhan Vivian's New York Times' best-selling award-winning novel. *The Kirkus Review's* (2012) states that the novel is an enthralling exploration of physical appearance. The novel addresses the need to have an open cultural conversation among the young adults.

Libba Grey, an American young adult novelist, known for her *Gemma Doyle* Trilogy commenting on *The List* states that the novel is powerfully and wonderfully layered novel that explores a girl protagonist who tries to assert her identity as a girl.

Vivian's recently published novel '*Stay Sweet'* (2018) is well appreciated by the people. *Kirkus Review (2018)* finds the novel as an empowering text that presents young women with big dreams. The protagonist, Amelia, possesses qualities needed to achieve her goals. However, she, like many girls, lacks confidence in using them. The novel reveals a journey of the heroine from a naïve girl to an empowered individual.

Rationale Behind the Selection of the Topic:

As mentioned above, the position of Siobhan Vivian is vital in young adult literature in America. Her novels address the issues like search for identity, woman empowerment, female sexuality, femininity, girlhood, sisterhood, friendship, getting into trouble, romance, sexual interests, parental problems, quest for identity, etc. No research has been carried out to this date on this aspect especially with reference to her novels. Hence, the researcher has attempted the proposed study.

Research Methodology:

Analytical and Interpretative methods will be used for the proposed research study. The Focus will rely on close reading and primary as well as secondary resources available on the subject. The proposed research is intended to create the theoretical framework and apply it to the select novels. The insights will be derived by eclectic feminist approaches and psychological theories.

TENTATIVE CHAPTER SCHEME

The following is a tentative chapter scheme for the proposed study:

CHAPTER I: Introduction

i) Brief survey of Young Adult Fiction

ii) Life and works of Siobhan Vivian

iii) Aim and Objective of the study

iv) Hypothesis

v) Review of relevant literature

vi) Rationale behind the selection of topic

vii) Research methodology

viii) Scope and Limitations of the Study

CHAPTER II: Femininity and Girl Culture: Theoretical Perspective

CHAPTER III: Hopes and Aspirations of Female protagonists

i) A Little Friendly Advice (2008)

*ii) Same Difference (*2017)

*iii) The Last Boy and Girl in the World (*2016)

CHAPTER IV: Search for Identity and Empowerment

*iv) The List (*2014)

v) Not That Kind of Girl (2010)

*vi) Stay Sweet (*2018)

***vii)* CHAPTER V: Conclusion**

This will be followed by the detailed select bibliography.

It is hoped that the proposed research will be a modest contribution to the study of young Adult fiction in general and the empowerment of female protagonists in Siobhan Vivian young adults in particular.

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Research Student Research Guide

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